

**COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
February 24, 2004
7:00 P.M.**

MAYOR JEFFREY A GRAHAM PRESIDING

PRESENT: **COUNCILMAN STEPHEN J. BRADLEY
COUNCILWOMAN ROXANNE M. BURNS
COUNCILMAN PETER L. CLOUGH
COUNCILMAN TIMOTHY R. LABOUF
MAYOR GRAHAM**

ALSO PRESENT: **CITY MANAGER MARY M. CORRIVEAU
ATTORNEY ROBERT J. SLYE**

Flower Memorial Library Board Presentation

Library Director Barbara Wheeler, Board President Jayn Graves and Vice-President Mark Gebo presented a report to Council outlining the capital plans for the library. Following a video presentation, Ms. Graves urged Council to grant their request for capital funding as the board feels the City's investment will set the tone and pace for other funding and donations.

Mrs. Wheeler outlined the plans for making the library an active community place. She explained that they want people to use the entire library. The plans call for the children's area to be moved upstairs with more seating and a stage as well as an imagination area. More computers would be available in this area as well. In addition, the library plans included expanding the genealogy area and making the reading rooms more comfortable. The room currently housing the microfilm would be turned into a community meeting room. A coffee shop and gift shop would be added and the circulation desk would mirror the shape and columns found in the rotunda. She explained that the plan is to include the needs of both the sides of building – the restoration of the older section and the renovation of the newer portion.

Mr. Gebo discussed the budget figures, explaining that the overall renovation and restoration is estimated to be \$1.5 million. He stated that this is an excellent opportunity for a public and private partnership. He explained that funding will come from three sources – 1) **Governmental:** (the County and the Town of Watertown will also be approached as well as the City), member items in the State legislature, state and federal grants will be pursued 2) **Foundations:** The Northern New York Community Foundation as well as other foundations such as E.J. Noble and possibly the Sweet Grass Foundation will be contacted 3) **Public:** Mr. Gebo discussed the capital credit available under the EDZ regarding donations from the public.

He suggested that part of the budget be put into a capital reserve fund to help with maintenance costs in the future. He explained that the library was also considering having auctions for collectors, perhaps on line, as another way to raise funds. Mr. Gebo asked that the City be a 1/3 partner and explained that the funding that is already in the library's capital budget would be a part of it. He stated that the money would need to be in the 2004-05 budget. He also advised Council that the library was asking the Northern New York Community Foundation for \$250,000.

Later in the work session, Mayor Graham asked about the listing on the library's budget sheet regarding Financial Development in the amount of \$60,000. He asked if that was to pay for a fundraiser.

Mrs. Corriveau responded that she did not know but would find out for the Council.

Mayor Graham asked Mrs. Corriveau how she envisioned the request.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that there is already \$72,000 in the current capital budget and \$73,000 in each of the next two years' budget. There are some other capital budget items such as the surveillance system, widening of the driveway and the elevator. Some of these have already been factored into the budget and would go toward the City's commitment. The library is looking for a commitment of \$500,000 from the City.

Councilwoman Burns explained that the committee feels the City must show a commitment in order to get extra funding for the project.

Councilman Clough expressed his concerns with the debt limit, retirement and health insurance costs that will affect this year's budget.

Mayor Graham commented that people will be willing to make a donation to restore a building and stated that he doesn't feel one should always rely on government agencies. He stated that the City already funds the library at \$660,00 a year and does the maintenance on the building.

Councilwoman Burns responded that it is a City owned building and therefore that is why they have asked for the City's help. The library will be reaching out to the community. She also explained that when the request for funding came in from the YMCA, she voted against it. However, the library is a City owned building and therefore, if given a choice to help restore/renovate the library or buy a new dump truck, she would vote for the library.

Mayor Graham commented that he supports the plan. However, it is a question of what the City can afford.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that \$317,700 has already been committed over three years.

Councilwoman Burns asked if some of the work could be done in-house.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that she would have to look into it. However, timing and availability of City crews will be one of the determining factors. She also commented that she didn't believe the library would view in-kind services as funding.

Mayor Graham asked what the timetable was for an answer back to the library. He stated that the Council needs to know specifically what they are allocating funds for.

Councilman Clough remarked that it was a very ambitious presentation. He commented that \$500,000 right now is different than the \$300,000 over three years. He questioned if it could be done in phases.

Councilwoman Burns explained that the committee had discussed doing it all at once or in phases. However, it is difficult to go back to people asking for additional contributions if it was done in phases. She also commented that this is being done to expand on the services for the community.

Mayor Graham asked Mrs. Corriveau to contact the library to see what kind of payment schedule they would be comfortable with and then see how it fits into the City's finances.

GIS Update Presentation & Demonstration

I.T. Manager Peter Keenan and Austin Fisher from Applied GIS Inc. presented a demonstration of GIS and the applications that the City can use this technology for.

Mr. Keenan explained that they have met with the County to see how the GIS programs can be shared. The City should be able to share their property information with the County in the near future.

Mrs. Corriveau explained that this information for the City will fill in the County map and thus, will give developers the opportunity to see the whole County, including the City.

Mr. Fisher explained that this system could be used in-house as well as on a web based interface which would allow for public use.

Councilman Clough questioned the fact that this is confidential information and could be misused if on a web site.

Councilwoman Burns responded that the same information could be obtained by phoning the Assessment Department.

Mr. Fisher suggested that in the future, the City should consider dedicating at least one full time person to keeping the GIS system updated and current. He explained that the system should be up and running in two to three months.

Councilwoman Burns asked about the equipment needed to support GIS in the future and training costs.

Mr. Keenan explained that there will be desktop stations and there will be maintenance costs. He also explained that training for the individuals working closely with it is being handled by the grant. Other training would be minimal and would be done in-house.

Mr. Fisher explained that a two-hour training session is all that is needed to operate the system and retrieve the needed information.

Watertown City Police Department Community Wide Policing Phase II

Chief Piche reviewed the report prepared by the Center for Community studies at J.C.C. with the Council.

Councilwoman Burns commented that she is pleased to see that the citizens' perceptions were positive. She remarked that this report indicates that the drug activity is the number one concern of the people in the community and she feels the Police Department needs to focus on that.

Mrs. Corriveau asked Chief Piche to talk about the fact that we are ranked No. 1 in the State for meth labs.

Chief Piche advised Council that they must realize that cocaine and crack are still the drugs of choice. 75% of the labs are discovered due to an initial patrol call. He explained that most of the people cooking meth are also users.

Councilwoman Burns commented that meth labs could have affects on a neighborhood and is a serious concern. She commended the media for their coverage of the meth labs. She asked what effect it would have on the meth lab problem, if two or three officers were assigned to the task force.

Chief Piche explained that this wouldn't have much of an effect on meth labs as it would on cocaine and crack. He explained that the community would be better served by patrol officers' vigilance regarding the meth lab problems.

Councilwoman Burns commented that the officers and the task force are doing a phenomenal job and should be commended.

Councilman Bradley referred to the conclusions/recommendations section of the study and commented that he would like to see what happens in three or six months after these recommendations have been followed.

Status Report on Black River Grants

Mrs. Corriveau referred to this report. In the case of the brownfields, she explained that the City is attempting to get a time extension that will allow us to move forward with this grant.

FAA Airport Improvement Grant

Mrs. Corriveau advised Council that the City was advised that the FAA has been in discussion with our consultants indicating their anticipation to be able to fund \$1.8 million of the original \$3 million program application.

Policy and Procedures Regarding Smoking

Copies of the report were supplied to the Council.

Local Government Conference

Mrs. Corriveau advised Council that if any member wishes to attend this conference, they need to let her know.

Empire Zone Economic Development Policy Meeting

Mrs. Corriveau advised the Council that she had been informed by Andrew Davis that a policy would be available for the meeting of March 10th.

Councilman Clough also remarked that the Council would receive copies of the document prior to the meeting.

Sales Tax Discussion

Mrs. Corriveau shared a presentation with the Council, which had been prepared by Jefferson County, outlining sales tax in New York State. She explained that 41 counties in New York have a sales tax greater than 3%. Eleven counties increased their sales tax rates in 2003 and at least six other counties (exclusive of Jefferson County) have asked the State for special legislation to increase local sales tax in 2004. State mandates and Medicaid increased costs are used as reasons for Jefferson County to increase the sales tax. Graphs indicated the increase in retirement contributions. Mrs. Corriveau explained that the City's contribution graph would look even higher since Police and Fire have a higher rate to be factored in. The County has drawn from their fund balance over the last few years and is now in a situation where there is only 1.67 % unappropriated fund balance. The anticipated deficit for the County in 2005 is \$10,402,000.

Mrs. Corriveau shared a presentation she and Mr. Mills prepared outlining the City's sales tax history. The City's portion of the sales tax in 2000-01 was \$9,674,500. The following fiscal year it was \$8,985,700 – a decrease caused not only by 9-11 but also by

the removal of the sales tax on clothing. In FY 2002-03 the City's portion was \$9,771,900. Year-to-date it is \$6,670,700. In general fund revenues, sales tax accounted for 37% in 2000-01; 35% in 2001-02 and in 2002-03. Mrs. Corriveau explained that the City and the County have an agreement that 28% of the sales tax collected in the County comes to the City. The County receives 38.6 % and the remaining 33.4% is distributed among the towns and villages.

Attorney Slye answered questions concerning the sales tax and explained that New York State Tax Law caps the sales tax at 3% unless an application is submitted for special legislation to impose an additional 1%. The County is currently looking at a two-year request for the 1%, but nothing has been submitted at this time. He also explained that the City could impose a sales tax in lieu of the County for goods sold in the City. However, there is a procedure that requires special legislation as well. Attorney Slye explained that the 1969 agreement between the City and the County and advised that the agreement can be terminated by either the City or the County with a six-month notice. He also advised that remarks made in the Watertown Times about the city only deserving 16 % is incorrect as the City's sales tax revenue, by state law, must be based at least on its percentage of the county's total population, not assessed value. Therefore, at worst, the City would be at 24%.

Mayor Graham remarked that he felt this was an issue that the Council should be brought up to speed on.

Councilwoman Burns stated that she agreed. However, it is premature at this point as it is not clear what the County is going to do.

Councilman Clough commented that we don't know if the County is going to follow through with it. However, he stated that he didn't want to see a reoccurrence of what happened last time when the sales tax was eliminated and the City was not included in the discussions.

Councilman Bradley commented that the real issue should be how to increase sales, which in turn would increase the sales tax revenues.

Council agreed that they had to wait to see what further discussions evolve at the County level.

Adjournment

The work session ended at 9:20 p.m.

Donna M. Dutton
City Clerk